

## Message Text

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ORIGIN EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 PRS-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 VO-03

SCA-01 INSE-00 SY-05 PA-01 USIE-00 SS-15 PM-04 L-03

NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US (VARTANOV, ILYA LAZAREVICH)

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE ON VARTANOV CASE

REF: MOSCOW 18530

1. EMBASSY MAY DRAW FROM FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE

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2. Q: WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE VARTANOV CASE DESCRIBED IN THE NOVEMBER 24 LITERATURNAYA GAZETA?

A: THE STORY DESCRIBES THE CASE OF I.L. VARTANOV, A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET AID MISSION IN EGYPT, WHO APPLIED TO OUR EMBASSY IN CAIRO WITH HIS WIFE AND SMALL DAUGHTER ON SEPT. 30 FOR ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES. WE HELPED THEM COME TO THE US, AND THEY WERE PAROLED INTO THIS COUNTRY AS REFUGEES ON OCTOBER 4. THEY SUBSEQUENTLY DECIDED THAT THEY WISHED TO RETURN TO THE USSR, AND AFTER A PREDEPARTURE INTERVIEW WITH US INS AND DEPT. OF STATE OFFICERS TO ESTABLISH THAT THEIR DECISION TO RETURN WAS VOLUNTARY, THEY WERE ALLOWED TO DEPART ON AN AEROFLOT FLIGHT TO MOSCOW ON OCTOBER 6. THE LITGAZ ARTICLE DISTORTS THE BASIC FACTS AND MAKES SOME WILD CHARGES.

Q: HOW DID THEY GET FROM EGYPT TO THE UNITED STATES?

A: I HAVE NO COMMENT ON ANY ASPECT OF HOW THEY TRAVELED TO THIS COUNTRY.

Q: HOW ABOUT THE SOVIET CHARGE THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ISSUED THEM PHONY GERMAN PASSPORTS?

A: NO COMMENT.

Q: WAS VARTANOV A DEFECTOR?

A: HE WAS PAROLED INTO THIS COUNTRY AS A REFUGEE, NOT AS A DEFECTOR.

Q: WHERE DID THEY STAY WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES?

A: AT THE TOLSTOY FOUNDATION FARM AT VALLEY COTTAGE, NEW YORK.

Q: HOW DID THEY FIRST MAKE KNOWN THEIR WISH TO RETURN TO THE USSR?

A: THEY WENT TO THE SOVIET MISSION IN NEW YORK CITY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED THE DEPT. BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE, THEY WERE INTERVIEWED AT KENNEDY AIRPORT BY INS AND DEPT. OF STATE OFFICERS TO ASSURE THAT THEIR DECISION TO RETURN WAS VOLUNTARY.

Q: WAS THERE ANY POSSIBILITY OF FOUL PLAY BY THE SOVIETS HERE? COULD THE SOVIETS IN NEW YORK HAVE KIDNAPPED THEM AND FORCED TO WANT TO RETURN?

A: THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF THAT. AN INVESTIGATION CONVIRMED THAT THEY HAD, AS THEY TOLD AMERICAN OFFICIALS IN THEIR PRE-DEPARTURE INTERVIEW, GONE TO THE SOVIET MISSION TO THE UN BY THEMSELVES IN A TAXI.

Q: DO YOU THINK THIS WAS A SET-UP? DO YOU THINK THEY PLANNED FROM THE START TO PROBE AND EMBARRASS US AND THEN RETURN?

A: IN THE MEETING WE HAD WITH THEM, THEY SAID THEY HAD ASKED THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM OF THEIR OWN FREE WILL, BUT HERE THEY HAD CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND WANTED TO RETURN TO THE USSR. WE HAVE NO CONVINCING EXPLANATION OF WHY THEY ACTED IN THIS MANNER.

Q: WAS THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT INVOLVED IN THEIR DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT?

A: THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT WAS NOT INVOLVED.

Q: WHO IS LEONARD WILLEMS, NAMED IN THE ARTICLE AS A CIA OFFICER ASSIGNED TO THE DEPARTMENT?

A: WILLEMS IS A CAREER FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER WHO WORKS IN THE OFFICE OF SOVIET UNION AFFAIRS ON BILATERAL PROBLEMS. HE PARTICIPATED IN THE PREDEPARTURE INTERVIEW.

Q: DID HE THREATEN VARTANOV AS REPORTED IN THE LITGAZ ARTICLE?

A: OF COURSE NOT.

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Q: WHO ARE THE OFFICERS FROM OUR EMBASSY IN CAIRO WHO ARE NAMED IN THE ARTICLE--JAMES FIESE, BRIAN FLANAGAN AND CHRISTOPHER BARRETT?

A: THEY ARE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO OUR EMBASSY.

Q: ARE THESE PEOPLE--WILLEMS OR THE OFFICERS IN CAIRO--CIA PERSONNEL?

A: AS A MATTER OF POLICY WE DO NOT COMMENT ON SUCH ALLEGATIONS. ROBINSON

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